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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 27, 1959



MEMORANDUM OF MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT  
(Tuesday, 24 March 1959)

I reminded the President that he had approved a presentation to the National Security Council in its March 26th meeting with respect to German Reunification, European Security, Berlin and A Peace Treaty. This presentation would be based largely upon a report of the Paris Working Group and would seek to use visual aids to identify problems with respect to which decisions had already been taken and those which required further decision. I reported to him that Acting Secretary Herter had demonstrated an extreme reluctance to proceed with the presentation, especially if it were to be made in the full Council Meeting, although Mr. Herter had indicated that he would be willing to discuss it at a smaller group. The basis for Mr. Herter's reluctance, as stated to me, was that the State Department people had been busy with the Macmillan visit; there was insufficient time; it was impossible to determine the allies' positions as of March 26; he feared that discussion at this time would lead to a frozen position which might leak to our detriment; the subject involved purely "diplomatic negotiations" etc. I said to the President that although I did not think the various reasons assigned had much validity, it probably would be now difficult to have the visual presentation to which State was an indispensable party. The President responded that he thought we had gotten to a sorry state of affairs if matters of this sort could not be discussed in the National Security Council. Nevertheless, he felt that he could agree to a limited meeting which would involve the statutory members, less Governor Hoegh, plus Mr. Merchant or Mr. Murphy, plus Secretary Anderson, plus Chairman McCone, and members of his personal staff.

I pointed out to the President that the meeting was being held against the approaching Foreign Ministers Meeting on March 31 at which the Foreign Ministers were expected to:

1. Consider the working group report, approving it insofar as agreement is reached.

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2. Provide policy guidance which will enable the working group further to define a common position on substance and presentation when it resumes its work on some early date in April.

3. Agree on the presentation of preliminary views on the Western position to the NATO Ministerial Meeting on April 2 or 3, and

4. Agree on what the NATO Ministerial Council might appropriately be told concerning contingency planning for Berlin.

At this point I was interrupted by Mr. Stephens who announced the impending arrival of the Prime Minister of Denmark.



Gordon Gray

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